



GREATER LINDEN REINVESTMENT AREA REPORT & ACTION PLAN

Fall - Winter 1994/1995

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GREATER LINDEN REINVESTMENT AREA

In the Fall of 1994, individuals living, working, or owning property in or near the Greater Linden Reinvestment Area met to take a good look at their neighborhood as it is now and then develop activities that will bring about desired changes. Over 75 dedicated individuals participated in a series of three Saturday workshops and several smaller task force sessions. Working together, community members, city staff, and additional individuals offering technical expertise, clarified issues and developed activities that will positively affect the Greater Linden Reinvestment area.

The purpose of this report is to document community reinvestment planning activities that took place between August 1994 and January 1995, in a portion of the Greater Linden community. The report also contains a prioritized list of issues and activities that participants hope will foster new partnerships for getting things done, as well as strengthen partnerships already working to make Greater Linden a good place to work and call home.

The Greater Linden Reinvestment Area is located in the southern portion of South Linden. It is one of six community reinvestment areas designated in Columbus' older city neighborhoods. The other reinvestment areas selected for the period of 1994 through 1996 are Hilltop I & II, South of Main, Italian Village, and Southwood. They were selected using criteria developed by the Mayor's Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee in 1993. Through the reinvestment program, the city is making a firm commitment to a "bottom-up," rather than "top-down" approach to neighborhood revitalization.

The Greater Linden reinvestment planning area is roughly bounded on the north by Seventeenth Avenue, on the south by Conrail Railroad tracks, on the west by Interstate 71, and on the east by Conrail Railroad tracks.

According to the 1990 Census, approximately 3,951 people live in the Greater Linden Reinvestment Area. The population distribution shows it to be predominantly African American at 93% of the total population, with approximately 5% of the residents white. Average household income in the reinvestment area is \$13,839, less than half the city-wide average of \$31,860. The reinvestment area's poverty rate is estimated to be 55.5 percent.

Approximately 84% of the housing units in the reinvestment area were built before 1960, with 29% of these units constructed by 1939 or earlier. Of the total number of housing units, approximately 28% are owner occupied and 63% are renter occupied; this differs from the city averages of 43% owner occupied and 49% renter occupied. Windsor Terrace, a large public housing project, is located in the southeastern portion of the reinvestment area. With 442 housing units, Windsor Terrace comprises approximately 31% of the total 1420 reinvestment housing units. In addition, there are a number of subsidized single family units and apartments located throughout the Linden area.

Windsor Terrace, built in 1959, is owned and operated by the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA). CMHA was recently awarded a substantial demonstration grant by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The grant will be used to improve and completely rebuild Windsor Terrace, as well as fund a number of educational, social service, economic and community service programs. Upon the project's completion, the total number of on site housing units will be reduced from 442 to 280. These units will include a mixture of single family homes, low rise flats and townhomes.

Located a mile north of downtown Columbus, South Linden was first settled by Revolutionary War soldiers, who received land grants for military service. The predominant housing style consists of wood-frame, one and two story, Cape Cods and 1950s style ranch houses. Housing conditions vary from block to block, with many well-manicured homes located next to poorly maintained and/or vacant houses. Many of the residential streets are enhanced by large mature trees,

recalling the time when much of what is now a developed urban neighborhood, was a dense forest.

Residential uses dominate the reinvestment area, including along Cleveland Avenue, a major north-south traffic corridor. A number of churches are located in the area, along with institutional uses such as the Windsor Alternative Elementary School and Fire Station #18. There are some commercial uses scattered along this portion of Cleveland Avenue, however there is no commercial core or concentration of commercial uses.

The Linden community has a proud history of community involvement. Many civic organizations have formed over the years to address issues of concern, as well as to promote the community and make quality of life improvements. There are many assets to be found in the reinvestment area. Among these strengths is an affordable single family housing stock, an eager workforce, an excellent location with easy access to the city's network of interstates, as well as land and buildings available for commercial and residential development.

Since the early 1990s, community members have been actively engaged in a variety of planning and community improvement activities. Aided by two federal grants, one each from the United States Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services, efforts are underway to enhance economic development, recruit and retain businesses, stimulate job opportunities for low- and moderate-income workers, and improve the delivery of economic and social services.

A direct result of the funding from the Department of Labor was the creation of a strategic marketing plan. Recognized as the Gateway South Linden: Strategic Marketing Plan, this document, completed in 1993, outlines specific economic development goals, objectives, steps, and projects. A primary initiative of this plan was the creation of the Greater Linden Development Corporation (GLDC). Established in September 1994, the GLDC will lead the implementation of economic and community development activities outlined in the Marketing Plan.

The Greater Linden Reinvestment Area is also located in the geographic area of Columbus recently designated by HUD, as a Federal Enterprise Community. Members of the Linden community actively participated with representatives from other Columbus neighborhoods, organizations, and civic and business leaders, to assemble a strategic plan for change in Columbus' central city.

Needless to say, involvement in planning and community goal setting is nothing new to many individuals living and working in the Greater Linden Reinvestment Area. Reinvestment activities provided an opportunity to utilize work previously accomplished in the community, bring more residents into the decision making process, set priorities, and focus revitalization efforts comprehensively...in a specific geographic portion of the Linden area.

Community members know that there is much to be done and are eager to get started.

COLUMBUS COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREAS

1994 - 1996

Announced in the Fall of 1993, the Community Reinvestment Program signaled a new approach to community reinvestment efforts in Columbus. It started as a pilot program with six of Columbus's central city neighborhoods. Initiated by the Development Department, the program is different from earlier revitalization efforts. Instead of focusing on single issues, problems, or programs, the city has forged partnerships with neighborhood residents and stakeholders to develop long-range plans that communicate each neighborhood's goals and priority activities for getting things done.

NEIGHBORHOOD REINVESTMENT: THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

The Community Reinvestment Program is one of the city's responses to recommendations made by a Low-Income Neighborhood Advisory Panel of The Urban Land Institute (ULI). In March 1992, the ULI Panel visited Columbus to examine our local situation and offer recommendations to improve the delivery of housing and neighborhood revitalization.

Sponsored by the local ULI Chapter and various business and development interests, the Panel examined background information, toured three study neighborhoods, and interviewed over 100 representatives of Columbus neighborhoods, financial institutions, development organizations and city government. The Panel concluded its public inquiry with a presentation of its findings. These recommendations included a statement on the need to clarify public policies addressing affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization.

The Panel also advised that neighborhood revitalization activities be based on comprehensive, holistic, neighborhood plans. The plans should include a definition of neighborhood boundaries that work, thus enabling resources to be concentrated in an area small enough to make an impact, yet large enough to be significant. Overall two things were stressed: to meaningfully have an impact, revitalization efforts must provide for resident and stakeholder participation at every step of the process, and be able to build upon an area's strengths and successes.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

Rather than trying to "fit" neighborhoods into particular city programs, the reinvestment plans, goals, and implementation strategies will be tailored to reflect each area's priorities and community vision. This reflects a "bottom-up," rather than "top-down," approach to neighborhood revitalization.

As mentioned earlier, area residents and stakeholders will direct city activities in their neighborhoods and be responsible for negotiating agreed upon community goals and action strategies. It is likely that new ideas will emerge during the planning process; if they are to become a reality, new partnerships will need to be forged. The city will make a three year commitment of staff and resources to each of the community reinvestment areas. However, successful revitalization efforts will need a variety of planning and implementing partnerships involving the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and most importantly, area residents.

REINVESTMENT AREAS AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION POLICY

In response to the ULI challenge to clarify the city's affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization policies, Mayor Gregory S. Lashutka convened the Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee (HNDC) in March 1993. Comprised of city officials, neighborhood leaders, community service providers, and representatives of the development community, this group drafted policies and strategies reflective of all housing and neighborhood interests. The policies will serve as the city's statement on the delivery of housing assistance and the revitalization of Columbus neighborhoods.

Additionally, the HNDC developed reinvestment area selection criteria. The criteria contain several broad themes, as follows: residential and stakeholder involvement, community based

planning, holistic programs, small areas to maximize impact, and signs of decay and distress. The committee also advised that the city give priority consideration to areas that have a history and a culture—that were once vital, and are now demonstrating the desire to regain their earlier vitality.

The six reinvestment areas were selected using this criteria. Most of the reinvestment areas are smaller sub-neighborhoods of existing community planning areas. They are referred to here as South of Main, Hilltop I & II, Greater Linden, Southwood, and Italian Village.

Each of the reinvestment areas have at least one “solid” border to build from. In some instances, the border is an interstate highway or industrial location that separates the neighborhood from other areas of decay and distress. In others, a stable neighborhood serves as the base from which to address revitalization activities. Other common strengths include active development organizations, other development activity underway that the program can build upon, strong resident participation and organization, affordable housing stock, and committed local institutions.

Planning and implementation activities began simultaneously in the 1994 designated reinvestment areas of South of Main and Hilltop. Hilltop I & II were combined for planning purposes and some implementation activities will be staged to occur in 1994, while other activities will take place in 1996. The annual designations correlate with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) yearly funding cycles.

Planning activities will precede the expenditure of CDBG funds set aside for reinvestment activities. Upon completion of the Hilltop and South of Main planning efforts, the remaining reinvestment areas will be phased in one at a time, as each preceding area completes a six month planning process.

The Development Department's Planning Division will lead the planning phase in partnership with the Neighborhood Development Division. The Neighborhood Development Division will use the created plan to coordinate a three year implementation phase in partnership with community members in each of the reinvestment areas, as well as other division and departments city-wide.

GETTING STARTED IN GREATER LINDEN

Planning efforts in the community reinvestment areas have been designed to encourage resident and stakeholder participation in decision making that will affect their neighborhood. Individuals, living, working, and owning property in the reinvestment areas are encouraged to take a good look at their neighborhood, and then identify activities that will bring about desired changes. It is the goal of this process to build confidence that citizens can make happen what they've planned to have happen.

To get things started in the Greater Linden planning area, a preliminary community meeting was held at the Lula Pearl Douglas Recreation Center. Present at the meeting were local leaders, including residents, members of civic groups, business organizations, social service organizations, churches, city government, and the Greater Linden Area Commission.

The meeting was called to lay the ground work for reinvestment planning activities. Several committees were formed including an Organizational Committee, which met three times from September to October to prepare for the community-wide workshops. The Organizational Committee reviewed the information and recommendations contained in documents developed in other recent community and city initiatives, as follows: (1) Jobs For South Linden Project: Strategic Marketing Plan, 1993; (2) South Linden Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan, 1993 OSU Studio; (3) Greater Linden Development Corporation: Business Plan, 1994; and (4) Columbus Enterprise Community Application and Strategic Marketing Plan, 1994.

Initially, the Organizational Committee reviewed and ranked the different solution activities, as outlined in the documents above. However, after careful review and discussion, it was determined that an early focus on potential activities might obscure other relevant neighborhood issues. Therefore, it was recommended that the first workshop focus on generating neighborhood issues as related to the following categories: safety; codes and enforcement; housing development and rehabilitation; capital/neighborhood improvements; economic development/job creation; and social services.

A series of workshops was scheduled to take place at the Lula Pearl Douglas Recreation Center. A theme was adopted, "Greater Linden: A Community Of Choice," and flyers and posters were created and distributed throughout the reinvestment area.

What follows is a summary of what took place at the Greater Linden workshops.

WORKSHOP I: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The first workshop took place on a beautiful fall day. Held on Saturday, November 12, 1994, at the Lula Pearl Douglas Recreation Center, the workshop attracted approximately 40 participants.

Following a brief overview outlining the goals and purpose of the Community Reinvestment Program, the workshop was organized into a series of small focus group discussions. Each focus group was assigned the task of identifying particular issues or problems, as related to the following six categories: safety, housing development and rehabilitation, codes and enforcement, capital/neighborhood improvement, economic development /job creation, and social services.

Workshop participants joined the focus group of their own choosing and were encouraged to participate in as many different groups as they desired. Assisting each focus group was a facilitator and a resource leader (business person, city official, social service or organizational representative). The resource leaders were asked to use their expertise to help residents identify problems and issues in a detailed way, and who they should get to help with developing potential solutions.

Following a period of discussion, each focus group reported their responses back to the full workshop. After all of the reports were made, participants ranked the issues reported in each of

the six categories by voting with dots. The vote was taken to identify the issues that participants felt were the most important to their neighborhood.

At the end of the meeting, citizen task forces were formed to continue the work of the focus groups. The task forces gathered additional information about the issues, met with resources to get their ideas and help, and developed potential solution activities.

The meeting concluded with a lunch catered by Mo-Doc's Fishery and funded by the Central Ohio Compliance Officers—a consortium of financial institutions.

WORKSHOP II: TASK FORCE REPORTS

The second workshop was held on December 3, 1994 at the Douglas Recreation Center. Together, over fifty people listened to the Task Force reports and began to consider the relative importance of the activities set forth.

Reports were made by the following Task Forces: Housing Development & Rehabilitation; Neighborhood/Capital Improvements & Code Enforcement; Social Services; and Safety. The Economic Development Task Force, unable to meet prior to the second workshop, did not provide a report nor make recommendations.

Participants spent most of the workshop discussing the different activities outlined by the Task Forces. Various points of view were shared and debated, as those present sought to clarify and understand the many different activities presented.

An important part of the day's agenda was the activity vote. Participants were to vote, in order to rank by highest priority, the activities that they felt would best improve their neighborhood. The Economic Development Task Force was not able to meet prior to the second workshop and was therefore unable to provide a report outlining potential activities.

Due to the importance of economic and employment related issues in the Greater Linden area, participants at the second workshop decided to reconvene in January, in order to give the Economic group more time to meet. It was also generally agreed that most of the task forces would benefit from another opportunity to meet and refine their proposed activities. Informal discussions about the activity reports continued through another lunch provided by the Central Ohio Compliance Officers.

WORKSHOP III: PRIORITY VOTE

The third and final planning workshop was held on Saturday, January 23, 1994 at the Douglas Recreation Center. This session was scheduled to wrap-up work begun at the second workshop, held on December 12, 1995.

Previously, participants reviewed task force reports and began to evaluate the activities outlined, with regard to their potential to affect positive, desired changes in the reinvestment area.

The third workshop got off to a late start due to the snowy weather. Once underway, each of the task forces presented their reports...starting with economic development. Prior to concluding the task force presentations, a discussion developed about whether participants should conclude the workshop by voting to rank the issue statements by priority, rather than vote to rank the proposed activities by priority, as had been the original goal.

Following a lengthy discussion a compromise was reached. It was agreed that participants would still cast "dot" votes by activity. However, the activity votes would be totaled within each issue statement and these totals would be used to rank the issue statements as the mechanism for setting priorities.

The meeting concluded with participants sitting down to a well-deserved lunch. Several participants signed up to help organize an open house, where this report and action plan will be presented to the greater community.

PLANS FOR ACTION

SOCIAL SERVICES

- **Priority Issue and Activities:**

Issue Statement #1:

The Social Services Task Force determined that two preliminary steps need to take place before a complete report can be made to the community. First, more reinvestment area residents need to be involved in identifying issues and deciding program activities. To address this problem, area agencies will speak to the people they serve to gain better insights into the needs and issues of area families and individuals. The second step involves taking an inventory of existing community agencies to determine their services and capacities. With this in mind, however, the Task Force did identify some issues, that led to the development of the activities found below. These issues included the problems faced by many young black males in the area who are unemployed, along with the need to offer leadership and positive enrichment, educational, and career development activities to area youth. Further, it was strongly felt that activities and programs should validate and support the importance of families.

√√ Activity One: **Develop a leadership development program for teens ages 14-18. The purpose of this program is to develop the leadership abilities and skills of young men and women in the community. Mentoring, tutoring, educational enrichment, and career development planning will be specific components of this program. Youth will be paid a stipend for their participation in the program.**

Activity Leader: **Urban Concern.**

√√ Activity Two: **Further develop and expand existing mentoring and role modeling programs for youth and adults who are unemployed. The program will link youth and adults in the community with role models and mentors who grew up in the area and who are now employed. They will provide support and assistance in completing school, educational and training programs, and in obtaining successful employment. The programs will be culturally specific and tailored to the strengths and needs of each individual participant.**

Activity Leader: **St. Stephen's Community House.**

√√ Activity Three: **Assist elderly residents with transportation, home maintenance, and referrals for various services.**

Activity Leader: **St. Stephen's Community House.**

NEIGHBORHOOD & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

- **Priority Issue and Activities:**

Issue Statement #1:

The Greater Linden Reinvestment Area is in need of repairs and maintenance.

√√ Activity One: **Create an on-going committee to oversee the completion of identified capital improvements, such as street repaving, alley improvements, curb and sidewalk repairs, improving drainage problems, and improved street and alley lighting. Develop a task force to survey the neighborhood and to identify needs, in particular, capital improvements.**

Activity Leader: **Linden Capital Improvement Task Force, Columbus Development Department's Planning and Neighborhood Development divisions, and Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center.**

√√ Activity Two: **Coordinate maintenance efforts in the area including better trash pick-up on vacant lots, mowing of weeded lots, additional refuse containers and more complete refuse collection especially during special neighborhood events.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Public Service Department's Refuse Collection Division, property owners, and Columbus Health Department.**

- **Additional Issues and Activities:**

Issue Statement #2:

The Greater Linden area is in need of visual improvements.

√ Activity One: **Develop uniform design guidelines for commercial and residential properties to help create an aesthetic character for the neighborhood and reduce blighting components (security bars on windows, unattractive color combinations, etc.).**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation, and Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center.**

√ Activity Two: **Uniform enforcement of the Graphics Code along Cleveland Avenue or the develop a special Graphics Code for Cleveland Avenue that would create a more attractive commercial environment.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation, Columbus Development Department's Regulations Division, Graphics Commission, and Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center.**

√ Activity Three: **Remove wooden poles, particularly those not in use and replacement of those leaning. Request Hendrix bundling of overhead wires to clean up the visual atmosphere.**

Activity Leader: **Linden Capital Improvement Task Force, Columbus Public Utilities Department's Electricity Division, Columbus Southern Power, Ohio Bell, and cable companies.**

Issue Statement #3:

There is a lack of greenspace and greenery in the Greater Linden neighborhood.

√ Activity One: **Develop greenspace west of Cleveland Avenue.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Land Reutilization Program, Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

√ Activity Two: **Develop public parks, particularly pocket parks as child play areas.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Land Reutilization Program, Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, and Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center.**

√ Activity Three: **Develop greenspace visible from Cleveland Avenue, greenways along streets and use greenspace as buffering between conflicting uses (the Railroad tracks, I-71, Windsor Terrace and industrial uses east of Cleveland Avenue).**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, and Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center.**

√ Activity Four: **Implement a Neighborhood Landscaping Beautification Program.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

Issue Statement #4:

A significant number of structures are deteriorated and detract from the neighborhood environment.

√ Activity One: **Neighborhood involvement in Zoning Code rewrite to change the time limit on how long a structure can be boarded.**

Activity Leader: **Linden Capital Improvements Task Force, Greater Linden Development Corporation, and Columbus Development Department's Regulations Division.**

√ Activity Two: **Initiate a neighborhood-based nuisance abatement process to develop a list of violators for quicker City action.**

Activity Leader: **Nuisance Abatement Task Force, Columbus Development Department's Regulations Division, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

√ Activity Three: **Advertise existing rehabilitation programs which offer funds to be used to help bring commercial and residential properties up to Code.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division, Greater Linden Development Corporation, Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center, Community Housing Development Corporations, and financial lenders.**

√ Activity Four: **Create a Planning Overlay which addresses standards for exterior building facades.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Planning Division, Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

√ Activity Five: **Hold Judge Pfeiffer's Environmental Court in the neighborhood for local offenders — referred to as, Community Court.**

Activity Leader: **Franklin County Municipal Court.**

Issue Statement #5:

Key intersections and gateways need to be improved to be more noticeable by travelers.

√ Activity One: **Make right-of-way improvements between Cleveland Avenue and the Windsor Terrace neighborhood that would make this internal community more visible.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Public Service Department's Division of Engineering and Construction, and Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority.**

√ Activity Two: **Make gateway improvements to public and private properties that would enhance the look of Cleveland Avenue at the intersections of 11th, 12th, Windsor and 17th avenues.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation, Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center, and Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division.**

√ Activity Three: **Utilize the 11th Avenue School site for a major redevelopment project.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

HOUSING

- **Priority Issue and Activities:**

Issue Statement #1:

A large percentage of the area's residential units are renter occupied. The Reinvestment community would like to see the percentage of home ownership significantly increased.

√√ Activity One: **Establish a workshop to teach home maintenance and homeownership responsibilities and include fiscal management and budgeting.**

Activity Leader: **St. Stephen's Community Homes and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

√√ Activity Two: **Develop a video that educates homeowners on how to select contractors, properly maintain a home, identify quality workmanship, etc.**

Activity Leader:

√√ Activity Three: **Provide down payment assistance in the form of a grant, to renters wanting to become homeowners.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division.**

√√ Activity Four: **Investigate the "Bucks Program" that provides a 3/2 down payment assistance for renters.**

Activity Leader:

√√ Activity Five: **Complete a newsletter/publication that will inform the community of programs and financial assistance available to when purchasing a home.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division, financial lenders, State of Ohio, and nonprofit housing corporations.**

√√ Activity Six: **Provide a supply of housing; rehabilitate existing units and sell to potential home buyers.**

Activity Leader: **Local community development corporations, Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division.**

√√ Activity Seven: **Explore the feasibility of infill housing. Rehabilitate existing structures before completing substantial infill.**

Activity Leader: **St. Stephen's Community Homes, Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

- **Additional Issues and Activities:**

Issue Statement #2:

The quality of some rehabilitation work previously completed in the community is questionable. For some area residents, loan repayments have outlasted the home repairs purchased. In addition, some area property owners, particularly the elderly, have fallen victim to unscrupulous and unqualified contractors. The community would like to use well-qualified local contractors to complete rehabilitation in the area. This fosters economic development in the community by providing jobs for local contractors.

√√ Activity One: **Select independent contractors to inspect work completed.**

Activity Leader:

√√ Activity Two: **Require the completion of more inspections before warranties lapse. Require that a final inspection take place within one year prior to termination of warranty period.**

Activity Leader:

√ Activity Three: **Improve the city contractor selection process. Review standards and revise, if necessary to ensure well-qualified contractors. In particular, evaluate regulations that prohibit commercial contractors from qualifying to do residential rehabilitation work.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division.**

√ Activity Four: **Establish a list of local contractors for use in the community.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division.**

√ Activity Five: **Research the possibility of establishing an incubator program that will train and qualify local contractors.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

√ Activity Six: **Establish a ranking system of available contractors to be used as a guide when selecting a contractor to complete rehabilitation work.**

Activity Leader: **Local Community Development Corporations, Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division.**

Issue Statement #3:

In many cases, absentee property owners do not take adequate care of properties located in the reinvestment area. These properties are deteriorating and in need of major repairs. The lack of property maintenance, especially among rental properties, creates an impression of decline. Although it is felt that owner-occupied and "resident-investor" properties (investment property owned by community residents) will be better maintained and positively impact the area, efforts need to be taken to utilize existing codes for regulating property conditions. This problem should also be addressed on a city-wide basis, with attention to strengthening enforcement measures regulating deteriorated, vacant and/or abandoned structures.

√ Activity One: **Enforce environmental court issuances; make the system work for the good of the community. Strictly enforce the rules with the absentee landlords.**

Activity Leader: **Franklin County Environmental Court.**

√ Activity Two: **Strictly enforce the city code. Have code enforcement officers monitor units showing signs of deterioration.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Regulations Division.**

√ Activity Three: **Establish a city-wide task force that addresses ways to more strictly enforce absentee landlords to take better care of property.**

Activity Leader: **Legal Aid office, HUD, Columbus Development & Health departments, community residents, South Linden Area Commission, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

Issue Statement #4:

Community members are not informed about how to properly maintain a home. Focus should be on females who are current or potential homeowners.

√ Activity one: **Set up a training program/workshop that teaches simple and easy techniques to help residents with basic repairs and preventive maintenance. Help residents learn to identify potentially major problems that may require professional assistance.**

Activity Leader: **Habitat for Humanity, OSU Simple Home Repairs Program, and Hechingers.**

√ Activity Two: **Establish a list of phone numbers or a "hot line" for residents to call for assistance concerning housing issues.**

Activity Leader: **FIRSTLINK, Columbus Urban League, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

Issue Statement #5:

Homeowners and investors are not aware of the various federal, state, city, and financial lender programs available to assist with housing rehabilitation. And, in some cases where resources are known, the procedures for accessing these funds are unclear.

√ Activity One: **Inform community of financial assistance available from the city to help with rehabilitation costs. Mail flyers, do radio announcements, sponsor workshops, complete informational brochures, knock on doors and conduct interviews particularly targeting seniors.**

Activity Leader: **City Year Program, South Linden Area Commission, Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

√ Activity Two: **Define and clarify process to obtain funds for homeowners and investors.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

√ Activity Three: **Publicize what programs and monies are available for homeowners and investors. Be clear about maximum dollars available per unit, how much is a grant, how much is a loan, and how to repay the loan.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

● **Priority Issue and Activities:**

Issue Statement #1:

Many area residents lack the skills and training necessary to obtain available jobs and those individuals with adequate skills are frequently unaware of available job opportunities. Vocational and business training is needed that will help residents develop necessary job skills or entrepreneurial ability, or both. There are a variety of job training programs available to Columbus residents. However, there appears to be a number of barriers that prevent Greater Linden residents from accessing these programs, including:

1. A general lack of information about what is available;
2. Transportation (both access and affordability);
3. Money for incidentals (lunch, supplies, etc.);
4. Flexible supportive services, such as day care, that can accommodate a variety of schedules beyond "9 to 5."

√√ Activity One: **Inventory the vocational and job skills training available to Columbus residents city-wide.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation, and Franklin County JOBS Program.**

√√ Activity Two: **Interview reinvestment area residents to determine present job skills and the type of training/education needed. Determine what the barriers are, beyond a general lack of information, that prevent reinvestment area residents from utilizing available employment resources. Develop appropriate strategies to help residents overcome these barriers.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation, area organizations, and service providers.**

√√ Activity Three: **Interview Linden area businesses to determine the types of jobs skills that their employees must possess.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation, Columbus Development Department's Economic Development Division, Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, and area businesses.**

√√ Activity Four: **Create a pool of trained and/or qualified workers, composed of Linden area residents meeting the employment requirements of area businesses.**

Activity Leader: **The Private Industry Council, Columbus Urban League, area business, area residents, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

√√ Activity Five: **Develop and implement a series of activities to get the information out about available vocational and job skills programs, including representation by area employers with information about potential career opportunities and the job skills required. Involve the Mayor and Council Members in these events and develop a team of local business and community leaders to personally contact area employers and solicit their assistance and attendance.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation, area business, and community leaders.**

- **Additional Issues and Activities:**

Issue Statement #2:

New businesses are not seeking to locate in the reinvestment area. Existing businesses, that need supportive services or have the ability to positively represent the area or both, have not been identified nor utilized effectively. A large factor affecting business location decisions is community appearance. However in Linden, the condition of Cleveland Avenue, with vacant and poorly maintained store fronts, aging infrastructure, vacant lots and poor parking access, perpetuates negative perceptions about the community and undermines recruitment and retention efforts.

Another retention and recruitment problem in Linden is the cost of business insurance; this is a large financial burden for small businesses. (The Task Force realizes that the ability to impact insurance costs probably lies outside the scope of the Community Reinvestment Program. However, it is felt to be a significant enough problem affecting business costs in the Linden Area and other older city neighborhoods that it should be noted here.)

√ Activity One: **Establish strong contacts with existing businesses, including a data base listing general information such as number of employees, skill requirements, needs, etc.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation, Columbus Development Department's Economic Development Division, and Linden area businesses.**

√ Activity Two: **Complete profiles and renderings of actual or potential retail and service related business locations in the Community Reinvestment Area. This is a marketing initiative to support community economic development efforts. The profiles should include photo, a basic site plan, a location map, and specific information.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation and Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center.**

√ Activity Three: **Form Business Retention & Recruitment “Hit” Teams. The retention teams will work to insure that businesses currently located in the Reinvestment Area remain here; efforts will be directed at businesses identified as considering relocation out of the area. The recruitment teams will focus their attention on influencing business decision makers to locate their businesses to the area. Both the recruitment and retention teams will be strategically assembled in order to have the expertise necessary to be effective.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Development Corporation, Columbus Development Department’s Economic Development and Neighborhood Development divisions, and area business leaders.**

√ Activity Four: **Conduct a parking study of the Cleveland Avenue Corridor to develop specific recommendations that will address parking shortages.**

Activity Leader: **South Linden Business Association, Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center, and Greater Linden Development Corporation.**

Issue Statement #3:

The 11th Avenue School, which had been in a vacant and deteriorated state for a number of years, was demolished in 1994 due to extensive fire damage. The site, located at one of the major “gateways” into the Linden area, is in close proximity to both the intersection of Cleveland Avenue and 11th Avenue, and I-71. It is a site with strong visibility both community and city-wide, and has the potential to become a high-impact project that will serve as a catalyst for other community revitalization activities. The legality of the 11th Avenue School Site is currently in question (ownership, lien holders, environmental issues etc.) These issues will need to be resolved before specific redevelopment plans can be made or acted upon.

√ Activity One: **The City should acquire ownership of the 11th Avenue School site.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus City Attorney’s Office, Columbus City Council, and Columbus Development Department.**

SAFETY

- **Priority Issue and Activities:**

Issue Statement #1:

There is illegal drug activity in the reinvestment area that is too often blatant, involving drug houses, open street activity, and includes late night congregating and disturbances. There is also an array of problems involving carry outs which includes illegal alcohol and drug activity, as well as outdated food, aesthetics (internal and external), abuse of pay phones, sales to minors,

groups hanging out, litter, and open containers. There is also a problem with youth out walking around late at night in violation of curfew laws.

√√ Activity One: **Develop a safety intervention plan.** Address the problems created by carry-outs, crack houses, street drug dealing “hot spots” and other concentrations of illegal activity, including sales of liquor to minors and general aesthetic problems and associated undesirable conditions at houses and businesses in the area where owners are not following through responsibly to correct problems. Make fuller and systematic use of Nuisance Abatement statutes by making not only criminal case follow up, working with police, but also civil actions initiated by the citizens group(s) in the community. Allocate funds from community reinvestment dollars designated for Linden to a community nonprofit organization, like the new Greater Linden CDC. Use these funds to strengthen the communities ability to expedite due process, more systematically intervene in situations involving community safety, and develop the safety intervention plan. The safety intervention plan will include the following:

- **Nurture and expand the block watch network**, presently numbering about 30, to act as a community based reporting and follow up system to assure good reporting to police, The block watch is a natural mechanism to more fully involve the community (e.g. town meetings at monthly block watch coalition meetings once per quarter, publicizing of meeting times and locations in area media, etc.)
- **Provide systematic written notice to owners of property repeatedly involved in illegal activity.** Initiate citizen based civil court actions on nuisance abatement cases. Go for property receivership where problems continue to recur in spite of court ordered closings.
- **Target carry outs for particularly intensive intervention** and follow up because of the serious problems many of these establishments are presenting to the community.

Activity Leader: **Greater Linden Community Development Corporation.**

- **Additional Issues and Activities:**

Issue Statement #2:

Lack of alternatives for youth and adults; youth are not effectively engaged in developing solutions to create a safer community.

√ Activity One: **Assure that the plan to develop a teen center at the Aquafresh Building on Cleveland Ave. becomes a reality as soon as possible. Utilize this facility and services as the nucleus of a comprehensive strategy to better involve and engage youth in developing positive solutions.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Metropolitan Community Action Organization.**

Issue Statement #3:

Lack of communication between the community and the police, with special concern about homicide sites, communication with young black males, and the need for more education about police policies and procedures.

√ Activity One: **Develop and implement a systematic community education program to establish an ongoing dialogue in the community with police; become more familiar with each others capabilities, limitations, procedures, etc. Utilize the regular meetings of the Block Watch Coalition as a forum for this initiative.**

Activity Leader:

NEXT STEPS

The Neighborhood Development Division will meet with the community to develop an implementation plan for the Greater Linden reinvestment area. We will use the Greater Linden Reinvestment Area Report and Action Plan as our starting point.

City staff will meet with the community quarterly or on an as needed basis for the following reasons:

- to update the community on the status of activities and projects
- to facilitate the development of programs and projects with non-city related agencies and programs.
- to report relevant information and activities of focused smaller subcommittee groups to the larger committee.

City staff will be available to respond to questions and concerns from individuals or neighborhood groups in the community.

The Neighborhood Development Division will continue the partnership established with the community during planning activities, and will commit to working with each neighborhood for at least three years.

City staff will encourage community review of planned priorities on an annual basis.

THANK YOU

The success of the reinvestment workshops is directly attributable to the active participation of community members living and working in the Greater Linden area. Many other individuals and organizations played a supporting role by helping to organize for the workshops, facilitating discussion groups, providing technical expertise, and distributing information.

Workshop and Task Force Participants

Workshop and Task Force Facilitators

Prepared by the City of Columbus Planning Division

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Grace Greczanik, Graphic Designer

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Special Thanks

The Central Ohio Compliance Officers:

Bank One,

Century Bank,

Commerce National Bank of Columbus,

County Savings Bank,

Fifth/Third Bank,

Household Bank,

The Huntington National Bank,

Limited Credit Services,

National City Bank,

NBD Bank,

Park National Bank,

Provident Bank,

Society National Bank,

Star Bank,

State Savings Bank;

Mo-Doc's Fishery catering; and

Dale McCampbell and

the staff of the Lula Pearl Douglas Recreation Center.

Photos: Daniel Thomas, Urban Design Manager.